

## How to change your world Luke 17:1-6

Proposition: You have the seed of faith in you already; speaking it out by faith will release God's power through your words to change your life.

When looking at this passage that we have before us today earlier in the week, I thought, Lord this is simple and so powerful why do I sometimes forget to live according to the wisdom you expressed here. This week's text was like a reminder to me on how to use the faith I have been given to change the world around me.

Picture this. Jesus is walking towards Jerusalem, knowing exactly what will happen to him when he gets there. The people he loves and serves will reject him and hand him over to be cruelly crucified for the sins of humanity. As he is walking along the road surrounded with the apostles and who knows how many disciples he taught them some incredibly valuable truths about how to live by faith. There is a treasure of practical truth in this passage that stands to transform your world if you can learn to apply it daily.

### **Luke 17**

#### **1 Jesus said to his disciples:**

***There will always be something that causes people to sin. But anyone who causes them to sin is in for trouble. A person who causes even one of my little followers to sin 2 would be better off thrown into the ocean with a heavy stone tied around their neck. 3 So be careful what you do.***

***Correct any followers of mine who sin, and forgive the ones who say they are sorry. 4 Even if one of them mistreats you seven times in one day and says, "I am sorry," you should still forgive that person. 5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Make our faith stronger!"***

#### **6 Jesus replied:**

***If you had faith no bigger than a tiny mustard seed, you could tell this mulberry tree to pull itself up, roots and all, and to plant itself in the ocean. And it would!***

The first two verses are pretty straight forward and don't need further explanation and even the first half of verse 3 is as well

***"Correct any followers of mine who sin."*** Now that is not hard. We can all do that. If we see a Christian brother or sister going off track and slipping into sin and we care about them of course we will go to them and lovingly and humbly correct them, with the hope that they can quickly be restored to a right standing with God.

***"Correct any followers of mine who sin."*** No worries, easy, but then the second half of the verse says ***"forgive the ones who say they are sorry"***. That bit is just a little bit harder, that can get a bit tricky. If they say they are sorry forgive them.

Now the Rabbis of the day had a very well known teaching about forgiveness and it went like this. If you are a really, really good man or woman, if you are a very mature person spiritually, a Godly person then if someone were to hurt you or mistreat you, you were to forgive them up to three times a day. The perfect man or the perfect woman, the really spiritual person could forgive someone else up to 3 times a day for the sins or offences against them. Now bear that in mind as Jesus continues to teach on this issue of forgiveness.

#### **4. Even if one of them mistreats you seven times in one day and says, "I am sorry", you should still forgive that person.**

Now that's not easy. Forgiving one offence a day is pretty hard, two is really hard, three times in a day from the same person and you would be seen as the perfect spiritual person but 7 times in the same day. Wow. Now you will recall that when the Hebrews used the number 7 it was a number used to describe completion or perfection and so Jesus wasn't saying if your brother or sister sins 8 times you can whack them. He was saying if the person says I am sorry, I repent, you need to forgive them continually.

Forgive them continually if they ask for forgiveness, now you are talking about something unnatural, something very hard. Now I would have expected the apostles and the disciples to have turned to Jesus at this point and said Lord if you want us to be able to forgive them continually, then you had better lay hands on us and pray for us to have more love and more compassion because what you are saying is starting to sound impossible. That would have probably been my response "Lord, lay hands on me and pray for me to have more love if I am going to be able to do this."

Interesting thought though, from what I have seen of life and of people having relational problems it appears possible to me to love someone but still not forgive them, and at the same time distance yourself from them and really desire nothing else to do with them. I have seen parents and adult children fall out and they really love each other and but there is not going to be any further time together.

I think that forgiveness is harder to exercise or put into practice than love because if someone hurts you, sins against you repetitively it's hard to forgive because firstly you want to make sure that someone does something about it, and if you forgive that person then maybe they will never be challenged with their sin and the way they treated you, and so it's hard to forgive because you want them to be held to account for their actions. Secondly I think it's hard to forgive because if you do will that mean that they might attack you or hurt you or wound you emotionally or financially or socially again in some way.

If you are going to obey the commands of Jesus and forgive continually then it's not love that you need but faith because faith says that God I trust you to sort this person out, faith says Lord if I forgive them I trust you to look after me and my family and protect us from further harm.

So in reality faith is the issue not love here, faith and forgiveness go hand in hand, and because of that I really want to take my hat off to these apostles for their wisdom and perceptiveness in this situation.

**5. *The apostles said to the Lord, "Make our faith stronger!"***

Now surely Jesus will lay hands on them and pray for them to have increased faith, to make their faith larger and stronger and more impacting on the world. That's what I would do but not the Lord. Watch what he says to help them develop world changing faith; faith that will enable you to relate rightly and forgive continually and faith that will change the world around you.

What comes next is profound and I really want you to take it in and live it out.

**6. *Jesus replied: If you had faith no bigger than a tiny mustard seed, you could tell this mulberry tree to pull itself up, roots and all, and to plant itself in the ocean. And it would.***

Jesus says if you have faith, faith the size of a mustard seed, which incidentally was the smallest thing that was common to them in those days. You and I might say if you have faith that is microscopic or extremely small and that would convey the same meaning.

If you had faith the size of a mustard seed you could tell that tree to go jump in the ocean and it would obey you.

Why is Jesus likening faith to a seed?

Do you recall our study on Luke 8 during missions' month? Jesus was telling the parable of the sower and the seeds and he said that the seed was the ... Word of God.

These guys already had the Word; the seed in their hearts. They had heard the word and they had believed on it.

**1 Peter 1:23 (NIV)**

***23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.***

What is being said here is this: If you are a believer; if you have been born again; you already have within you faith the size of a seed. You might say to me hey Russell I have faith but it really isn't that big or strong. That doesn't matter. The reality is you have the seed of faith in you and that is all it's going to take to begin to start making changes to your world. You have heard the Word which is the seed, you have faith the size of a seed in you so you can say to that mountain or that tree go jump and it will.

When I looked at this passage which links faith and forgiveness and trees I could see parallels in what went down in the Garden of Eden and on the cross of Calvary but the strongest parallel I could see is found in Hebrews 12.

### **Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)**

**15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.**

If you don't forgive; if you allow yourself to become bitter about anything, or anyone, then you destroy yourself from the roots up. Your life becomes warped and polluted, defiled.

I want to use two phrases to explain to you what the Lord is telling us here, which are amazingly helpful for you and me to be able to forgive continually and to be able to change the world around us.

**They said Lord expand our faith.**

**Jesus said no, you express your faith.**

**They said Lord increase our faith.**

**Jesus said no, you unleash your faith.**

Now how does God want us to express and unleash our faith?

Jesus said concerning the tree, this tree of forgiveness, this tree of bitterness, the tree that is dominating your life and draining your energy.

**You are to speak to the tree.**

Jesus doesn't say pray about it or do more study on it he says TELL the tree to pull itself up and be planted into the sea. And it will obey you! Speak to the tree. Why speak? Because faith is implanted in you through the Word but it is unleashed through you when you open your mouth and speak the words of faith.

### **Romans 10:9-10 (CEV)**

**9 So you will be saved, if you honestly say, "Jesus is Lord," and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. 10 God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others.**

In New Testament times the confession Jesus is Lord was the confession they made just prior to being baptised and Paul makes it very, very clear for your faith to be activated, for it to be real and effective in your life you need it confess it and tell it to others.

**"Saved" comes from the Greek word Sozo and means to experience the full spectrum of God's blessing i.e. Salvation, Deliverance and Healing**

Jesus didn't just preach this principle of speak out the faith that is already in you theoretically he demonstrated it practically all the time. I think that when he speaks of the tree or the mountain that needs to be removed I think in the context it is referring to a hurt, an offence or a looming problem but just two days later Jesus gave this teaching Mark's gospel records:

### **Mark 11:12-14 (CEV)**

**12 When Jesus and his disciples left Bethany the next morning, he was hungry. 13 From a distance Jesus saw a fig tree covered with leaves, and he went to see if there were any figs on the tree. But there were not any, because it wasn't the season for figs. 14 So Jesus said to the tree, "Never again will anyone eat fruit from this tree!" The disciples heard him say this.**

### **Mark 11:20-26 (CEV)**

**20 As the disciples walked past the fig tree the next morning, they noticed that it was completely dried up, roots and all. 21 Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree. Then Peter said, "Teacher, look! The**

***tree you put a curse on has dried up."***

***22Jesus told his disciples:***

***Have faith in God! 23If you have faith in God and don't doubt, you can tell this mountain to get up and jump into the sea, and it will. 24Everything you ask for in prayer will be yours, if you only have faith.***

***25-26Whenever you stand up to pray, you must forgive what others have done to you. Then your Father in heaven will forgive your sins.***

Jesus is demonstrating practically what he had just taught as recorded in Luke 17.

That is what you believe in your heart you need to confess, speak out with your lips to release the power for change through your life. If you have some huge mountain of a problem looming over you, if you have issues of forgiveness, if you are bitter about something or there are some blockages in your life or in your ministry speak to it.

Verbalise with your mouth the seed of faith that has been implanted in your heart and you will be releasing God's supernatural intervention into your life.

Hebrews 11:3 says that God spoke the world into existence.

Psalms 33: 6 & 9 say he created through his spoken word.

And God SAID "Let there be light and there was"

Jesus made things happen through His spoken words. He wasn't trying to be positive or playing the name it, claim it game. Jesus spoke out of the faith that was already within him; "Lazarus come out" "Storm be still" or "Fig tree dry up" and Lazarus and the storm and the fig tree did as they were told. God the Father and God the Son built things through the power released in the spoken word, and I want to say to you my friends that is also true for you and me. We impact the world we live in by the power of faith expressed through our words.

The book of Proverbs also describes the power of words by saying that life and death are in the tongue.

If you want to bring about the purposes of God in your life and see your life prosper, then Joshua 1:8 is a promise, a pearl of wisdom, which really works. As I read it just be aware that the word meditate in this context means to mutter it over and over again.

***Joshua 1:8 (NIV)***

***8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.***

And of course, Joshua who continually spoke out the promises of God by faith was exceedingly prosperous.

You and I can change our lives and the world around us when we express words that verbalise the seed of faith that is already in our hearts.

Being positive won't work. Just quoting scriptures you don't believe yet won't work magically, but if you and I believe it here (heart) and express it here (mouth) then the power to change ourselves and our environment is released.

Jesus said "speak to the tree". He said "speak to the mountain" and tell them to go and jump and they will.

Moses understood the power of faith being expressed verbally. When God first calls him to lead the Israelites he says, just a minute Lord, I am no good at speaking I am a stutterer. Then God asks Moses. "Moses, who made your mouth?" "Just go and do it." And he does; he leads the people out of captivity. They travel through the desert to a place where they have mountains in front of them on one side and the Red Sea on the other and the mad Egyptians coming at them with chariots and weapons of mass destruction. The people cry to Moses, Moses cries out to the Lord and God says. "What are you talking to me for?" "Go and talk to the children of Israel and tell them to go out into the Red Sea and I will part the water before them." "Moses go and speak to the problem." Not long later they are complaining to Moses again because they are all thirsty and so Moses complains to God and God says again, "What are you talking to me for, go and talk to that rock over there and tell it to give you water." Moses does and the rock obeys.

You might be a great prayer or a great worshipper or a great student of the Word and yet you are only seeing minimal results in your life and in the world around you. Why isn't the water parting you might say to the Lord? And He might just whisper back to you, "Why are you talking to me?"

The seed of faith, the seed of the Word has been implanted in your heart already. It doesn't have to be big but you need to speak to that mountain that's looming over you, to that tree that is eating you up inside, you need to mutter over and over again the truths of God's Word that you believe, you need to verbalise your faith declaration. Let the Word in your heart flow from your lips and see what happens.

The Father spoke and things happened, Jesus spoke and the dead walked and the storm submitted, you and I need to release the faith we already have to move our mountains and trees.

Three brief stories.

When I was pastoring in Raetihi I had concern for a couple of people with mental health problems. One day one of the elders, Ian said to me "Russell do you realise that continually you say to these guys that they have these conditions?" "But they do," I said. And he pointed out to me this principle. He said "Let's not pretend they haven't but start declaring what can be by faith." Now these guys were not healed but whenever I prophesied over them they were stable and calm for hours. My spoken words of faith changed something within their brains for a number of hours each time.

When I had been at Ranui Baptist Church for a few years one of our elders here challenged me also. They said, "Russell do you realise that you keep saying from the pulpit that we are a poor church full of beneficiaries?" He or she, I can't remember, asked me to stop it and declare God's provision over the church. I did that and instantly it seemed there was an improvement in our giving and in our applications for funding grants getting approved.

Healing is something I will never pretend to understand but most weeks there would be two or three people who I pray for who experience an instant release from pain as I pray for an increase in mobility. I don't get many major miracles like legs growing and bones mending but this I have noticed. That the majority of the times when something dramatic has happened it is after I have told the pain to go or the bruising to go or the virus to go. Now pain doesn't have a personality and in most cases there is nothing demonic behind it but the pain is the problem and so I speak to the pain and tell it to go and ask for God to send His healing power and that is when I see the best results. Speak to the problem by faith and see what God can do.

Here are some examples of speaking out in faith:

I believe that when I feel weak and tired He can make me strong so when I am feeling like that should I say "Oh I'm stuffed" or should I say like the prophet Joel said; "let the weak say I am strong.

When I am worried about paying this week's bills should I say I don't have enough money or if I believe in God's provision should I declare that my God will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory?

When that person annoys me or hurts me again shall I say; Oh I am never going to talk to him or her again or should I say what I believe; that is that I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me.

This week you and I will create and remould the worlds we live in through our words.

How you express verbally your beliefs will dramatically affect the world you live in.

The seed of the Word is already in you. You have enough faith; this week you get to express it and release it to impact your world.

Not everything will come right straight away. Abraham was commended for his faith and his patience as he waited to see the promise of God fulfilled in his life.

***Hebrews 10:23 We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us.***

***Hebrews 10:36 (CEV)***

***36 Learn to be patient, so that you will please God and be given what he has promised.***